George Washington Flowers
Memorial Collection

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

ESTABLISHED BY THE
FAMILY OF
COLONEL FLOWERS

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

https://archive.org/details/nationalsinsfast00thor

THE FLOWERS COLLECTION

IX.

National Sins.

A

FAST-DAY SERMON:

PREACHED IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, COLUMBIA, S. C.,

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1860,

By Rev. J. H. THORNWELL, D. D.

COLUMBIA, S. C.:
SOUTHERN GUARDIAN STEAM-POWER PRESS.
1860.

SERMON.

"And it came to pass, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord."—*Isaiah* 37 : 1.

I have no design, in the selection of these words, to intimate that there is a parallel between Jerusalem and our own Commonwealth in relation to the Covenant of God. I am far from believing that we alone, of all the people of the earth, are possessed of the true religion, and far from encouraging the narrow and exclusive spirit which, with the ancient hypocrites denounced by the Prophet, can complacently exclaim, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we. Such arrogance and bigotry are utterly inconsistent with the penitential confessions which this day has been set apart to evoke. We are here, not like the Pharisee, to boast of our own righteousness, and to thank God that we are not like other men; but we are here like the poor publican, to smite upon our breasts, and to say, God be merciful to us, sinners. My design, in the choice of these words, is to illustrate the spirit and temper with which a Christian people should deport themselves in times of public calamity and distress. Jerusalem was in great straits. The whole country had been ravaged by a proud and insolent foe. The Sacred City remained as the last hold of the State, and a large army lay encamped before its walls. Ruin seemed to be inevitable. *It was a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy. The children had come to the birth, and there was not strength to bring forth.* In

the extremity of the danger, the sovereign betakes himself to God. Renouncing all human confidence, and all human alliances, he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.

In applying the text to our own circumstances, widely different in many respects from those of Jerusalem at the time referred to, I am oppressed with a difficulty, which you that are acquainted with my views of the nature and functions of the Christian ministry can readily understand. During the twenty-five years in which I have fulfilled my course as a preacher—all of which have been spent in my native State, and nearly all in this city—I have never introduced secular politics into the instructions of the pulpit. It has been a point of conscience with me to know no party in the State. Questions of law and public administration I have left to the tribunals appointed to settle them, and have confined my exhortations to those great matters that pertain immediately to the kingdom of God I have left it to Cæsar to take care of his own rights, and have insisted only upon the supreme rights of the Almighty. The angry disputes of the forum I have excluded from the house of the Lord. And while all classes have been exhorted to the discharge of their common duties, as men, as citizens, as members of the family—while the sanctions of religion have, without scruple, been applied to all the relations of life, whether public or private, civil or domestic—the grounds of dissension which divide the community into parties, and range its members under different banners, have not been permitted to intrude into the sanctuary. The business of a preacher, as such, is to expound the Word of God. He has no commission to go beyond the teaching of the Scriptures. He has no authority to expound to senators the Constitution of the State, nor to interpret for judges the law of the land. In the civil and political sphere, the dead must bury their dead. It is obvious, however, that religious sanctions cannot be applied to civil and

political duties without taking for granted the relations out of which these duties spring. Religion cannot exact submission to the powers that be, without implying that these powers are known and confessed. It cannot enjoin obedience to Cæsar, without taking it for granted that the authority of Cæsar is acknowledged. When the Constitution of the State is fixed and settled, the general reference to it which religion implies, in the inculcation of civil and political duties, may be made without intruding into the functions of the magistrate, or taking sides with any particular party in the Commonwealth. The relations which condition duty are admitted, and the conscience instantly recognizes the grounds on which the minister of the Gospel exhorts to fidelity. The duties belong to the department of religion; the relations out of which they spring belong to the department of political science; and must be determined apart from the Word of God. The concrete cases, to which the law of God is to be applied, must always be given; the law itself is all that the preacher can enforce as of Divine authority. As the law, without the facts, however, is a shadow without substance; as the duty is unmeaning which is determined by no definite relations; the preacher cannot inculcate civil obedience, or convict of national sin, without allusions, more or less precise, to the theory and structure of the government. He avoids presumption, by having it distinctly understood, that the theory which he assumes is not announced as the Word of God, but is to be proved, as any other facts of history and experience. He speaks here only in his own name, as a man, and promulges a matter of opinion, and not an article of faith. If the assumptions which he makes are true, the duties which he enjoins must be accepted as Divine commands. The speculative antecedents being admitted, the practical consequents cannot be avoided. There are cases in which the question relates to a change in the government, in which the question of duty is simply a question of

revolution. In such cases the minister has no commission from God to recommend or resist a change, unless some moral principle is immediately involved. He can explain and enforce the spirit and temper in which revolution should be contemplated and carried forward or abandoned. He can expound the doctrine of the Scriptures in relation to the nature, the grounds, the extent and limitations of civil obedience; but it is not for him, as a preacher, to say when evils are intolerable, nor to prescribe the mode and measure of redress. These points he must leave to the State itself. When a revolution has once been achieved, he can enforce the duties which spring from the new condition of affairs.

Thus much I have felt bound to say, as to my views of the duty of a minister in relation to matters of State. As a citizen, a man, a member of the Commonwealth, he has a right to form and express his opinions upon every subject, to whatever department it belongs, which affects the interests of his race. As a man, he is as free as any other man; but the citizen must not be confounded with the preacher, nor private opinions with the oracles of God. Entertaining these sentiments concerning the relations of the sacred office to political affairs, I am oppressed with the apprehension, that in attempting to fulfil the requisitions of the present occasion, I may transgress the limits of propriety, and merge the pulpit into the rostrum. I am anxious to avoid this error, and would, therefore, have it understood, in advance, that whatever theory may be assumed of the nature and structure of our Government, is assumed upon the common grounds of historical knowledge, and is assumed mainly as fixing the points from which I would survey the sins of the country. If true—and no man has a right to reject them, without being able to disprove them—my conclusions in referenee to our national guilt are irrefragably established. If not true, we must either deny that we are sinners, or must seek some other relations in

which to ground the consciousness of sin. If that consciousness should be thoroughly grounded, the services of this day will not be in vain. I can truly say that my great aim is not to expound our complex institutions, but to awaken the national conscience to a sense of its responsibility before God. It is not to enlighten your minds, but to touch your hearts; not to plead the cause of States rights or Federal authority, but to bring you as penitents before the Supreme Judge. This is no common solemnity. The day has been set apart by the constituted authorities of this Commonwealth, by joint resolution of both branches of the Legislature, and proclaimed by the Chief Magistrate of the State, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer. South Carolina, therefore, as an organized political community, prostrates herself this day before God. It is a time of danger, of blasphemy and rebuke, and, imitating the example of Hezekiah, she rends her clothes, covers herself with sackcloth, and comes into the House of the Lord. The question is, how she should demean herself under these solemn circumstances. Every minister, this day, becomes her organ, and he should instruct the people as to the attitude which we should all assume in the presence of Jehovah. It is a day of solemn worship, in which the State appears as a penitent, and lays her case before the Judge of all the earth.

The points to which I shall direct your attention, are, first, the spirit in which we should approach God, and second, the errand on which we should go.

I. As the individual, in coming to God, must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, so the State must be impressed with a profound sense of His all-pervading providence, and of its responsibility to Him, as the moral Ruler of the world. The powers that be are ordained of Him. From Him the magistrate receives his commission, and in His fear, he must use the sword as a terror to evil doers and a praise to them

that do well. Civil government is an institute of Heaven, founded in the character of man as social and moral, and is designed to realize the idea of justice. Take away the notion of mutual rights and the corresponding notions of duty and obligation, and a commonwealth is no more conceivable among men than among brutes. As the State is essentially moral in its idea, it connects itself directly with the government of God. It is, indeed, the organ through which that government is administered in its relations to the highest interests of earth. A State, therefore, which does not recognize its dependence upon God, or which fails to apprehend, in its functions and offices, a commission from heaven, is false to the law of its own being. The moral finds its source and centre only in God. There can be no rights without responsibility, and responsibility is incomplete until it terminates in a supreme will. The earthly sanctions of the State, its rewards and punishments, are insufficient either for the punishment of vice or the encouragement of virtue, unless they connect themselves with the higher sanctions which religion discloses. If the State had to deal only with natures confessedly mortal; if its subjects were conscious of no other life than that which they bear from the cradle to the grave; if their prospect terminated at death; if they were only brutes of a more finished make, but equally destined to everlasting extinction, who does not see that the law would lose its terror, and obedience be stripped of its dignity. The moral nature of man is inseparably linked with immortality, and immortality as inseparably linked with religion. Among Pagan idolaters, the instinct of immortality, though not developed into a doctrine, nor realized as a fact in reflection, is yet the secret power which, in the spontaneous workings of the soul, gives efficacy to punishment, and energy to rewards. Man feels himself immortal, and this feeling, though operating blindly, colors his hopes and his fears. The State, therefore, which should undertake to accomplish the ends of its being,

without taking into account the religious element in man, palsies its own arm. Subjects that have no religion are incapable of law. Rules of prudence they may institute; measures of precaution they may adopt; a routine of coercion and constraint they may establish; but laws they cannot have. They may be governed like a lunatic asylum; but where there is no nature which responds to the sentiment of duty, there is no nature which confesses the majesty of law. Every State, therefore, must have a religion, or it must cease to be a government of men. Hence no Commonwealth has ever existed without religious sanctions. "Whether true or false, sublime or ridiculous," says the author of the Consulate and the Empire, "man must have a religion. Every where, in all ages, in all countries, in ancient as in modern times, in civilized as well as in barbarian nations, we find him a worshipper at some altar, be it venerable, degraded, or blood-stained."

It is not only necessary that the State should have a religion; it is equally necessary, in order to an adequate fulfilment of its own idea, that it have the true religion. Truth is the only proper food of the soul, and though superstition and error may avail for a time as external restraints, they never generate an inward principle of obedience. They serve as outward motives, but never become an inward life, and when the falsehood comes to be detected, the mind is apt to abandon itself to unrestrained licentiousness. The reaction is violent in proportion to the intensity of the previous delusion. The most formidable convulsions in States are those which have been consequent upon the detection of religious imposture. "When a religion," says McCosh, "waxes old in a country—when the circumstances which at first favored its formation or introduction have changed —when in an age of reason it is tried and found unreasonable—when in an age of learning it is discovered to be the product of the grossest ignorance—when in an age of levity it is felt to be too stern—then the infidel spirit takes cour-

age, and, with a zeal in which there is a strange mixture of scowling revenge and light-hearted wantonness, of deep-set hatred and laughing levity, it proceeds to level all existing temples and altars, and erects no others in their room." The void which is created is soon filled with wantonness and violence. The State cannot be restored to order until it settles down upon some form of religion again. As the subjects of a State must have a religion in order to be truly obedient, and as it is the true religion alone which converts obedience into a living principle, it is obvious that a Commonwealth can no more be organized, which shall recognize all religions, than one which shall recognize none. The sanctions of its laws must have a centre of unity some where. To combine in the same government contradictory systems of faith, is as hopelessly impossible as to constitute into one State men of different races and languages. The Christian, the Pagan, Mohammedan; Jews, Infidels and Turks, cannot coalesce as organic elements in one body politic. The State must take its religious type from the doctrines, the precepts, and the institutions of one or the other of these parties.

When we insist upon the religious character of the State, we are not to be understood as recommending or favoring a Church Establishment. To have a religion is one thing—to have a Church Establishment is another; and perhaps the most effectual way of extinguishing the religious life of a State is to confine the expression of it to the forms and peculiarities of a single sect. The Church and the State, as visible institutions, are entirely distinct, and neither can usurp the province of the other without injury to both. But religion, as a life, as an inward principle, though specially developed and fostered by the Church, extends its domain beyond the sphere of technical worship, touches all the relations of man, and constitutes the inspiration of every duty. The service of the Commonwealth becomes an act of piety to God. The State realizes its

religious character through the religious character of its subjects; and a State is and ought to be Christian, because all its subjects are and ought to be determined by the principles of the Gospel. As every legislator is bound to be a Christian man, he has no right to vote for any laws which are inconsistent with the teachings of the Scriptures. He must carry his Christian conscience into the halls of legislation.

In conformity with these principles, we recognize Christianity to-day as the religion of our Commonwealth. Our standard of right is that eternal law which God proclaimed from Sinai, and which Jesus expounded on the Mount. We recognize our responsibility to Jesus Christ. He is head over all things to the Church, and the nation that will not serve Him is doomed to perish. Before men we are a free and sovereign State; before God we are dependent subjects; and one of the most cheering omens of the times is the heartiness with which this truth has been received. We are a Christian people, and a Christian Commonwealth. As on the one hand we are not Jews, Infidels or Turks, so on the other, we are not Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, or Methodists. Christianity, without distinction of sects, is the fountain of our national life. We accept the Bible as the great moral charter by which our laws must be measured, and the Incarnate Redeemer as the Judge to whom we are responsible.

In contending that Christianity is the organic life of the State, we of course do not exclude from the privileges of citizens, nor from the protection of the laws, those who do not acknowledge the authority of Jesus. They do not cease to be men, because they are not Christians, and Christian principle exacts that their rights should be sacredly maintained by an institute which is founded in the idea of justice. As, moreover, the religion of the State realizes itself through the religious life of its subjects, it is not to be supported by arbitrary tests or by civil pains and disa-

bilities. Religion is essentially free and spontaneous. It cannot be enacted as a law, nor enforced by authority. When the State protects its outward institutions, such as the sanctity of the Sabbath, it enjoins nothing which does violence to any man's conscience. It is only giving vent to the religious life of the people, without exacting from others what they feel it sinful to perform; and so long as freedom of conscience and the protection of their rights are secured to men, they have no reason to complain that they are not permitted to unsettle the principles upon which all law and order ultimately rest. As long as they are not required to profess what they do not believe, nor to do what their consciences condemn; as long as they are excluded from no privilege and deprived of no right, they cannot complain that the spirit and sanction of the laws are a standing protest against their want of sympathy with the prevailing type of national life. If Christianity be true, they ought certainly to be Christians. The claim of this religion, in contradistinction from every other, or from none at all, is founded only in its truth. If true, it must be authoritative, and the people who accept it as true would be traitors to their faith if they did not mould their institutions in conformity with its spirit. It is only as a sanction, and not as a law, that we plead for its influence; and how a Christian people can have any other than Christian institutions, it surpasses our intelligence to compass. That the State should treat all religions with equal indifference, is to suppose that the subjects of the State can have a double life, flowing in parallel streams, which never approach nor touch—a life as citizens, and a life as men. It is to forget the essential unity of man, and the convergence of all the energies of his being to a religious centre. It is to forget that religion is the perfection of his nature, and that he realizes the idea of humanity in proportion as religion pervades his whole being. A godless State is, in fact, a contradiction in terms; and if we must have some god, or

cease to be citizens because we have ceased to be men, who will hesitate between the God of the Bible and the absurd devices of human superstition and depravity?

It is, then, before the Supreme Jehovah that we prostrate ourselves to-day. We come as a Commonwealth ordained by Him. We come as His creatures and His subjects. The sword by which we have executed justice, we received from His hands. We believe that He is—that He is our God; that His favor is life, and His loving kindness better than life. We ascribe to His grace the institutions under which we have flourished. We trace to His hands the blessings which have distinguished our lot. Under Him the foundations of the State were laid, and to Him we owe whatsoever is valuable in our laws, healthful in our customs, or precious in our history. We come this day to acknowledge our dependence, swear our allegiance, and confess our responsibility. By Him we exist as a State, and to Him we must answer for the manner in which we have discharged our trust. "*God standeth in the congregation of the mighty. He judgeth among the gods.*"

II. Having explained the spirit in which we should approach God, let me call your attention, in the next place, to the ERRAND which brings us before Him this day—fasting, humiliation, and prayer. These terms define the worship which we are expected to present. Fasting is the outward sign; penitence and prayer are the inward graces. In fasting, we relinquish for a season the bounties of Providence, in token of our conviction, that we have forfeited all claim to our daily bread. It is a symbolical confession that we deserve to be stripped of every gift, and left to perish in hunger, nakedness, and want. On occasions of solemn moment, and particularly when "manifestations of the Divine anger appear, as pestilence, war, and famine, the salutary custom of all ages has been for pastors to exhort the people to public fasting and extraordinary prayer." Through such a solemnity Nineveh was saved;

and if we are equally penitent, who shall say that we may not also be delivered from the judgments which our sins have provoked? Fasting, apart from inward penitence, is an idle mockery. *Is it such a fast as I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?* The great thing with us to-day is, to be impressed with a sense of our sins as a people; to confess them humbly before God; to deprecate His judgments, and to supplicate His favor. We are too apt to restrict the notion of sin in its proper sense to the sphere of the individual; to regard it as altogether private and personal, and not capable of being predicated of the mal-administration of the State. But if the State is a moral institute, responsible to God, and existing for moral and spiritual ends, it is certainly a subject capable of sin. It may endure, too, the penalty of sin, either in its organic capacity, by national judgments, by war, pestilence, weakness, and dissolution, or in its individual subjects, whose offences as citizens are as distinctly transgressions as any other forms of iniquity, and enter into the grounds of the Divine dispensations towards them. The State exists under a law which defines its duty. It is a means to an end, which limits its powers and determines its functions. It is the realization of an idea. Like an individual, it may sin by defect in coming short of its duty, and sin by positive contradiction to it. It may fail to comprehend its vocation; it may arrogate too much, or claim too little. It may be wanting in public spirit, or it may give public spirit a wrong direction. It may subordinate

the spiritual to the material, and, in encouraging the increase of national wealth, neglect to foster national greatness. In aspiring to be rich and increased in goods, it may forget that the real glory of a nation is to be free, intelligent, and virtuous. The power which it has received as an instrument of good, it may pervert into an engine of tyranny. It may disregard the welfare and prosperity of its subjects, and degenerate into a tool for the selfish purposes of unscrupulous rulers. It may seek to aggrandize factions, instead of promoting the well-being of the people. The State, too, as a moral person, stands in relations to other States, in consequence of which it may be guilty of bad faith, of inordinate ambition, of covetousness, rapacity, and selfishness. The same vices which degrade the individual among his fellows, may degrade a commonwealth among surrounding nations. It may be mean, voracious, insolent, extortionary. It may cringe to the strong, and oppress the weak. It may take unworthy advantages of the necessities of its neighbors, or make unworthy concessions for temporary purposes. The same laws regulate, and the same crimes disfigure, the intercourse of States with one another, which obtain in the case of individuals. The political relations of the one are precisely analogous to the social relations of the other. The same standard of honor, of integrity and magnanimity which is incumbent upon their subjects, is equally binding upon the States themselves, and character ought to be as sacred among sovereign States as among private individuals.

The true light, therfore, in which national defects and transgressions should be contemplated, is formally that of sin against God. Their injustice to their people is treachery to Him, and their failure to comprehend or to seek to fulfil the end of their being, is contempt of the Divine authority. We take too low a view, when we regard their errors simply as impolitic; their real magnitude and enor-

mity we can never apprehend until we see them in the light of sins.

It is to be feared that this notion of sin has not the hold which it should have of the public conscience. We are not accustomed to judge of the State by the same canons of responsibility which we apply to individuals. In some way or other, the notion of sovereignty, which only defines the relation of a State to earthly tribunals, affects our views of its relations to God; and, whilst we charge it with errors, with blunders, with unfaithfulness to its trust, and deplore the calamities which its misconduct brings upon its subjects as public evils, we lose sight of the still more solemn truth, that these aberrations are the actions of a moral agent, and must be answered for at the bar of God. The moral law is one, and the State is bound to do its duty, under the same sanctions which pertain to the individual. When the State fails, or transgresses, its offences are equally abominations in the sight of God. It is clearly idle to talk of national repentance, without the consciousness of national sin. This doctrine, therefore, I would impress upon you in every form of statement, that the misconduct of the State is rebellion against God, and that a nation which comes short of its destination, and is faithless to its trust, is stained with sin of the most malignant dye. God may endure it in patience for a season, but it is loathsome and abominable in His eyes, and the day of reckoning will at last come. Sin must either be pardoned or punished, confessed and forsaken, or it will work death. Sin has been the ruin of every Empire that ever flourished and fell. Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, have paid the penalties to the Divine law. The only alternative with States, as with their subjects, is, repent or perish. The first duty, therefore, which, as a Christian people, we should endeavor to discharge this day, is to confess our national sins with humility and penitence. We should endeavor to feel their magnitude and enormity, not as injuries to man, but as offences against the majesty of

God. Our language should be that of David: *Against Thee, Thee only, have we sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*

Another errand which it behooves us equally to prosecute to-day is, to seek Divine guidance and Divine strength for the future. *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, and States are no more competent than individuals to discharge their duties without the grace of God. Let us endeavor to cherish a sense of our dependence, and aspire to the distinction of that happy people whose God is the Lord. It is a great thing to contemplate our civil duties in the light of obedience to Him; and when they are undertaken in the spirit of worship, they are likely to be performed in the spirit of faithfulness. If we are truly penitent, and truly sensible of our dependence upon God; if it is the reigning desire of our hearts to know His will, and our fixed purpose, in reliance on His strength, to do it, He may give us an answer of peace. He may bring light out of darkness, and extract safety from danger.

Having indicated the spirit in which we should approach God, and pointed out the purposes for which we should go, it remains that we apply the truth to our present circumstances, by signalizing the sins which it behooves us to confess, and by designating the blessings which it behooves us to implore. The conscience is never touched by vague generalities; we must come to particulars; thus and thus hast thou done. The State appears as a penitent this day. She has, therefore, sins to confess. There is a burden upon her heart which must needs be relieved. What are these sins? What is this burden? The completeness of our answer to these questions will measure the extent and sincerity of our repentance.

To understand our sins, we must look at ourselves in a double light: first, as a member of this Confederacy, as part and parcel of the people of these United States; and, in the next place, as a particular Commonwealth, a perfect State in ourselves. As long as we are members of this

Confederacy we cannot detach ourselves from a personal interest in the sins and transgressions of the whole people; and, though there may be offences in which we have had no actual participation, we are not at liberty to indulge in a self-righteous temper, nor to employ the language of recrimination and reproach. The spectacle of sin is always sad. The fall of none should be contemplated with exultation or with triumph. We should look upon the errors of our brethren with pity and with sorrow, and, as Daniel confessed, in humility and contrition, and with deep commiseration for their misery, the sins of his people, so we should endeavor this day to deplore the shortcomings of our common country, as a matter of personal distress to ourselves. When we come before God, we should endeavor to contemplate the moral aspects of the country in the light of His awful holiness. And the more profoundly we are impressed with the malignity of our national guilt, the deeper should be our concern for the transgressors themselves. Sinners cannot triumph over sinners. Those whose only plea is mercy to themselves, ought not to be unmerciful to others. Much more should we be filled with sorrow when the sins we deplore are likely to prove the ruin of a great nation. To behold a vast, imperial republic, like ours, bequeathed to us by a noble ancestry, consecrated by a noble history, the work of illustrious statesmen and patriots, falling a prey to national degeneracy and corruption, is enough to make angels weep, and should wring from our hearts tears of bitterness and blood. The sin must be enormous where the punishment is so fearful. In less than a century we have spoiled the legacy of our fathers. A Christian people, with Christian institutions, the envy and admiration of the world, have not lived to the age of pagan Greece. Surely, God has a controversy with us, and it becomes us to inquire, with all solemnity, into the cause of His fierce anger. The union, which our fathers designed to be perpetual, is on the verge of dissolution. A name once

dear to our hearts, has become intolerable to entire States. Once admired, loved, almost adored, as the citadel and safeguard of freedom, it has become, in many minds, synonymous with oppression, with treachery, with falsehood, and with violence. The government to which we once invited the victims of tyranny from every part of the world, and under whose ample shield we gloried in promising them security and protection—that government has become hateful in the very regions in which it was once hailed with the greatest loyalty. Brother has risen up against brother, State against State; angry disputes and bitter criminations and recriminations abound, and the country stands upon the very brink of revolution. Surely, it is time to come to ourselves; to look our follies and our wickednesses in the face; time for every patriot to rend his garments, cover himself with sackcloth, and come into the house of the Lord. Let us deal faithfully this day; let us survey the sins of the land, not to accuse one another, but to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

1. To appreciate the sins which attach to us in our unity as a confederated people, we must advert for a moment to the peculiar structure of our government. When we came out of the Revolution, it is admitted on all hands that we were separate and independent States. Each was sovereign —that is, completely a nation in itself; but our fathers looked around them, and saw that the grounds of unity were as conspicuous as the elements of diversity. The people were of one blood, one language, one religion. They were, in short, one race. They surveyed the continent from north to south, from east to west, and its geography indicated that it ought to be the dwelling-place of a united population. While there were differences in soil, climate, and productions, that would naturally develope different types of industry, and give rise to different forms of interest, there were great connecting bonds in the mighty rivers which traversed the country, that as clearly

signified that the diversity was not inconsistent with unity. The problem, accordingly, which the wisdom of our ancestors undertook to solve was, to harmonize this diversity with unity; to make the people, who were already many, at the same time, one. One nation, in the strict and proper sense, they could never become; that would be to absorb the diversity in unity. Many nations, in all the relations of sovereign States, they could not be; that would be to abolish the unity altogether. The problem was solved by a happy application of the federal principle. The diversity existed already in the many States which had just achieved their independence. These many States, in the exercise of their sovereignty, formed an alliance, which cemented them together in one body politic. This alliance was, in its principle, a treaty, and in its result, a government. In its principle it was a treaty, because it was a compact among sovereigns. In its result it was a government, because it created organs of political power which, under certain conditions, acted immediately upon the people of all the States, without the formal ratification of their own Legislatures, and in all foreign relations stood as the representative of their common sovereignty. It is obvious that the ultimate ground of the authority of federal legislation is the consent of the confederating States. The laws of Congress bind me, only because South Carolina has consented that I should be bound. The rights of Congress are only the concessions of the sovereign States. This will appear from a moment's reflection. It is obvious that the States might have required that no measures of the Federal Government should be of force within their own borders, without the formal sanction of their own Legislatures. In that case, there could have been no dispute as to the ultimate ground of obedience. The difficulties of such an arrangement are too obvious to be enumerated, but how were these difficulties to be avoided? By surrendering the principle on which the authority of Congress depended, or

by changing the mode of its application? To have surrendered the principle would have been to abjure their own sovereignty. There was evidently, then, only a change in the mode of its application. That change consisted in defining the conditions under which consent might be presumed beforehand. The Constitution of the United States, in its grants of power to Congress, is only a device by which a general description is given, in advance, of the kind of legislation that each State will allow to be obligatory on its own people. The provisions of the Constitution are really anticipations of the concurrence of the States. They are formal declarations to the Federal Legislature, that within such and such limits, you have our consent to bind our people. In this way our fathers organized a government that united us for all common purposes, and left us in our original diversity to prosecute our separate and local interests. Congress is, therefore, only the creature of the States, and acts only through them. It is their consent, their treaty, which gives to its enactments the validity of law. As the Federal Legislature was clearly designed to realize the unity of the people, its powers are restricted, from the very necessities of the case, to those points in which all the States have a common interest. The creature of a treaty, in which the contracting parties were all equal, it is manifestly the servant, and not the master, of the States. It is an agent, and not a principal.

If this view of the subject be correct, the Federal Government is preëminently a government, whose very existence depends upon a scrupulous adherence to good faith. It requires the sternest integrity to work it. Its very life-blood is honor. Now, there are two respects in which it may fatally err. In the first place, Congress may transcend its powers, and thus be guilty of a breach of trust, and of disloyalty to its own masters. It may presume upon the consent of the States, where no consent has been given. It may forget that it is a servant, and aspire to be lord. It

may forget that it is an agent, and arrogate to itself the rights and authority of the principal. When it surveys the extent of its jurisdiction, the amount of its patronage, and the weight of its influence abroad, it may become dazzled with the contemplation of its own greatness, and attribute to itself the light that is reflected upon it. Its one people it may construe into one nation, and, unmindful of its origin, treat the sovereignties which created it as dependent provinces. Treating upon a footing of equality with foreign Powers, it may insensibly ascribe to itself the authority of Kings and Emperors. All this is conceivable; to some extent it is inevitable, unless the most scrupulous integrity should reign in the Federal Councils. But to sin in any of these respects is fraud, and fraud connected with treason. In the next place, the States may break faith with one another. They may refuse to fulfil their engagements. They may pervert the Federal authorities to the accomplishment of selfish and sectional ends. They may undertake to make their common agent the minister of partial advantages, or they may use lawful powers for unlawful purposes. Here, too, in the relation of the States to each other, is wide scope for fraud.

In one, or in both these directions, we may look for instances of national transgression; and on this day, we should solemnly review the history of the Republic, for the purpose of bringing our consciences before the tribunal of God. Perfidy, under all circumstances, is an aggravated sin; but when it brings in its train the destruction of institutions which have been the hope and admiration of the world; when it subverts the foundations of a great empire, scattering the seeds of dissension, bitterness and strife; when it arms house against house, and State against State, and converts a happy union into a scene of implacable and deadly feuds, language is hardly competent to describe the enormity of the guilt. The fraud which makes our government a failure, must darken the prospects

of liberty throughout the world. No polity can be devised which shall perpetuate freedom among a people that are dead to honour and integrity. Liberty and virtue are twin sisters, and the best fabric in the world, however ingeniously framed, and curiously balanced, can be no security against the corroding influences of bad faith. Perfidy is always weakness; and a government whose basis is the faith of treaties, must inevitably perish before it. The combination of the federal principle with the sovereignty of States, is the only principle which can maintain free institutions upon a broad scale. This combination can secure freedom to a continent; it might even govern the world. The day of small States is passed, and as the federal principle is the only one which can guarantee freedom to extensive territories, the federal principle must constitute the hope of the human race. It was the glory of this country to have first applied it to the formation of an effective government, and, had we been faithful to our trust, a destiny was before us which it has never been the lot of any people to inherit. It was ours to redeem this continent, to spread freedom, civilization and religion through the whole length of the land. Geographically placed between Europe and Asia, we were, in some sense, the representatives of the human race. The fortunes of the world were in our hand. We were a city set upon a hill, whose light was intended to shine upon every people and upon every land. To forego this destiny, to forfeit this inheritance, and that through bad faith, is an enormity of treason equalled only by the treachery of a Judas, who betrayed his master with a kiss. Favored as we have been, we can expect to perish by no common death. The judgment lingers not, and the damnation slumbers not, of the reprobates and traitors, who, for the wages of unrighteousness, have sapped the pillars and undermined the foundations of the stateliest temple of liberty the world ever beheld. Rebellion against God, and

treason to man, are combined in the perfidy. The innocent may be spared, as Lot was delivered from the destruction of Sodom; but the guilty must perish with an aggravated doom. The first instances of transgression may seem slight and insignificant, but when they strike at the principle of good faith, like a puncture of the heart, they strike at the root of our national life. The Union was conceived in plighted faith, and can only be maintained by a complete redemption of the pledge. The moment faith is broken, the Union is dissolved. Entertaining these views of the radical relations of good faith to the success and stability of our government, I would impress upon the country the flagrant iniquity of dealing loosely with its covenants. It is here that our dangers are concentrated, and here we should look for the sins that have provoked the judgments of God. Here is the secret of our bitter strifes, our furious contention, our deadly animosities; and, should this Government be destined to fall, the epitaph which may be written on its tomb, is a memorial of broken faith.

The foregoing remarks are general, and designed to bring no railing accusation against any section of the country, but to excite every part of it to a faithful review of its dealings under the Constitution. There is one subject, however, in relation to which the non-slaveholding States have not only broken faith, but have justified their course upon the plea of conscience. We allude to the subject of slavery. They have been reluctant to open the Territories to the introduction of slaves, and have refused to restore fugitives to their masters, and have vindicated themselves from blame by appealing to a higher law than the compacts of men. The doctrine of a higher law, properly interpreted and applied, we are far from repudiating. God is greater than man, and no human covenants can set aside or annul the supreme obligations of His will. But, in the present case, the plea is improperly applied. If it is wrong to countenance slavery by restoring fugitives to

their masters, or by permitting it to enter into the Territories, then the true method is to abrogate the contract which requires both. We repent of sin by forsaking it, and the only way to undo a wicked bargain is to cancel it. If the non-slaveholding States cannot in conscience redeem their faith, they are bound in honor to take back their pledges, to withdraw from the Union, and to release their confederates from all the conditions of the contract. No other course can they pursue without sin. To swear to observe the Constitution, when the Constitution binds them to do what they believe to be wicked, is an oath which, whether broken or kept, cannot be taken without dishonor. To keep it, is to violate the conscience in the unlawful article. To break it, is to be guilty of perjury. The only escape from this dilemma is, not to take it at all.

But, in truth, even upon the supposition that slavery is immoral, there is nothing wrong in the oath to observe the Constitution. The responsibility of slavery is not upon the non-slaveholding States. It is not created by their laws, but by the laws of the slaveholding States; and all they do in the case of the fugitive from his master, is to remand him to the jurisdiction of the laws from which he has escaped. They have nothing to do with the justice or injustice of the laws themselves. They are simply required to say that the accident of being on their soil shall not dissolve the relation between a subject and its government. The treaty existing among the States, in reference to this point, is precisely analogous to a treaty among foreign nations, requiring the surrender of criminals that have fled from justice. The country surrendering passes no judgment upon the merits of the case. It leaves the whole of the responsibility to the laws of the country claiming jurisdiction. All that it does is not to interpose and arrest the operation of those laws. Surely, there is nothing unrighteous in this; nothing unrighteous in refusing to screen a man from the authority of the code under which Provi-

dence has cast his lot. There is no obligation to do it without a treaty; but there is nothing inherently unlawful in making such a treaty, and in strictly adhering to it when made. The plea of conscience proceeds from a palpable misapprehension of the nature of the case.

The plea is still more flagrantly inadequate when applied to the exclusion of slavery from the Territories. All the States have confessedly an equal right of property in them. They are a joint possession. The citizens of any State may go there and take up their abode, and, without express contract to the contrary among the proprietors, they are at liberty to observe the customs of their own States. It is as if the land were distributed, and each State had a part. In that case, each State would evidently put its part under the jurisdiction of its own laws. The joint possession, to the extent of the partnership, places the Territory in the same relation to the laws of all the States. One has no more right to introduce its peculiarities than another, and without positive contract the peculiarities of none can be excluded. The case is as if a Christian and a Pagan people should acquire a common territory. Would it be competent for the Christian people, in the absence of a positive stipulation, to say to their Pagan neighbors, You shall not bring your idols into this land? You may come yourselves, but you come only on condition that you renounce your worship? If there is any wrong, it is in making the treaty at first; but if Christians and Pagans can enter into treaties at all, there is no crime in observing them. If they can lawfully acquire joint possession of a soil, the Pagan has as much right to introduce his idols as the Christian his purer worship. In respect to the question of slavery, if there is wrong any where, it is in the union of slaveholding and non-slaveholding States in one confederacy; but, being confederate, there can be no just scruple as to the fulfillment of their contracts. It is a mistake to suppose that the North sanctions slavery by doing justice to the South. It leaves

the whole responsibility of the institution where God has placed it, among the people of the South themselves. We do not ask the North to introduce it upon their own soil; we do not ask them to approve it; we do not ask them to speak a single word in its defence: we only ask them to execute in good faith the contract which has been solemnly ratified betwixt us. We ask them not to interfere with the jurisdiction of our own laws over our own subjects, nor with the free use of our own property upon our own soil. This is the head and front of our pretensions, and when these reasonable demands are met by the plea of conscience and the authority of a higher law, they must pardon our dulless, if we cannot understand that delicate sensibility to honor which makes no scruple of an oath that it does not mean to observe, and holds to the profit, without fulfilling the conditions, of the contract. When they ask to be released from their engagements, and, in token of their sincerity, are willing to release us from ours; when they are willing to abandon the Union rather than ensnare their consciences; when they abhor the wages, as sincerely as the deeds, of unrighteousness—then, and not till then, they may expect their plea to be admitted.

2. In the next place, we shall find ample ground of humiliation, if we consider the manner in which the organs of Government have been perverted from their real design, and changed in their essential character. All our institutions are representative. We legislate by parliaments, we judge by courts, and we execute by officers appointed for the purpose. The people in their collective capacity do nothing but choose their representatives. They enact no laws; they conduct no trials; they execute no sentences. Now, what is the genius and spirit of a representative assembly? Is it to give expression to the popular will? Is it to find out and do what the people, if assembled in mass, would do? Is it simply a contrivance to avoid the inconveniences of large convocations, and bound to seek the same results

which these convocations would be likely to effect? This doctrine I utterly and absolutely deny. Representatives are appointed, not to ascertain what the will of the people actually is, but what it ought to be. The people are not permitted to legislate *en masse*, because their passions and caprices are likely to prove stronger than reason and truth. Representation is a check upon themselves. Every State is bound to realize the idea of justice. This requires calm deliberation and sober thought. To provide for this deliberation, to protect themselves from their own prejudices and passions, and to cause the voice of reason to be heard, they retire from the scene, and leave the inquiry and decision of their duty to chosen men, in whose wisdom they have confidence. This is the true theory of parliamentary government. Courts are appointed to interpret the law, and officers to execute the decrees of the courts, in order that justice and not passion may rule in every trial. The supremacy of reason and justice is the supremacy of law and order. Contemplated in this light, parliamentary government is the most perfect under heaven. It avoids equally the extremes of the despotism of a single will, which is sure to terminate in tyranny, and of the still more hateful despotism of mobs, which is sure to terminate in anarchy. It gives rise to a free commonwealth. It aims at the true and right, and truth and rectitude are the safeguards of freedom. Such is the genius of our own institutions. But how has the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed! Has the Congress of these United States fulfilled its high idea? Called together to deliberate, to discuss, to inquire after truth; bound to listen to no voice but the voice of wisdom and justice—has it always presented the spectacle of gravity, decorum, and candor, which we expect to behold in the Senate of a free people? What shall we say, when gold has usurped the authority of truth, when votes have been bought and sold, and the interests of a faction allowed to outweigh the rights and interests of a

whole people? What shall we say, when blows have taken the place of argument, and our halls of legislation have been converted into an arena for the combats of fierce gladiators? What shall we say, when, instead of the language of calm deliberation, the representatives of the people have vied with each other in vituperation and abuse, and, when they have exhausted the dialect of Billingsgate, have rushed upon each other with the ferocity of tigers, or with the fury of the bulls of Bashan? The offence is rank, and smells to heaven. Such an awful prostitution of high functions can not take place with impunity. The hall which should have inscribed upon its portals *the scene of wisdom and of high debate*, cannot become a den of robbers, or a rendezvous for bullies and hectors, without provoking the just judgments of God. It is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that the Federal Legislature, which ought to have been a model of refined, impartial and courteous debate—a model to which we could always point with an honest pride, has made itself a scandal to a civilized people. The day of reckoning was obliged to come. The country is brought to the brink of dissolution.

The corruption is of the same kind when the tribunals of the law are set aside, and mobs usurp the jurisdiction of courts. There may be occasions when the established order is unable to check a threatening evil. In such cases, the necessities of self-defence may justify society in falling back upon its primordial rights. But these occasions are rare. But when society assumes, without necessity, the functions of judges and magistrates, it is guilty of an abuse which, if not arrested, must end in anarchy. *There* only is security where the law is supreme; and the worst of all social evils is where the populace is stronger than the law—where the sentence of courts is annulled by the phrenzy of mobs, and the officers of justice are insulted and restrained in the execution of their functions.

In these respects, all of which resolve themselves into the abuse of the representative principle, we have national sins to confess. We have poisoned the springs of our government. We have given to faction what is due to truth. We have dethroned reason and justice, and made our legislation a miserable scramble for the interests of sections and parties. We have deified the people, making their will, as will, and not as reasonable and right, the supreme law; and they, in turn, have deified themselves, by assuming all the attributes of government, and exercising unlimited dominion. They have become at once legislators, judges, juries, and executioners. The last form of evil has been only occasional, but unless checked and repressed, it may strengthen and expand. In proportion as it increases, reverence for law and for the forms of law loses its power. The tendency to sink our institutions into a pure democracy has been steadily growing. We are rapidly losing even the notion of a representative, by merging it into that of a deputy; and it is but the natural product of this error, that Congress should be the battle-ground of conflicting wills, and that its sole inquiry should become: what says the voice of the majority? *Vox populi, vox Dei.*

I have said, I think, enough to show that in our federal relations, we have reason to be humbled in the presence of God. Our Government is a noble one. Human wisdom could not have devised a better. With all our unfaithfulness it has made us great and prosperous. It has won for us the homage and respect of the world; and had we been faithful to its principles, the blessings it has already conferred upon us would be but the beginning of its triumphs. Could we continue a united people, united in heart as well as in form; could the government be administered according to the real genius of our federal and representative institutions, imagination can hardly conceive the scene of prosperity, influence and glory which would dawn upon our children a hundred years hence. When we contem-

plate what we might become, and then look at the prospect which is now before us, we have reason to put our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and to exclaim: *God be merciful to us sinners!* Let us weep for the country. Let us confess our own sins and the sins of the people. God may hear the cry of the penitent, and say to them, as He said to Moses, when he deplored the sins of his people, *I will make of thee a great nation.*

3. There are other forms of sin which, though not national in the sense that they pertain to the administration of the government, are national in the sense that they are widely diffused among the people: they enter into the grounds of the Divine controversy with us; and, if not repented of and forsaken, must end in national calamities. Conspicuous among these is the sin of profaneness. The name of God is constantly on our lips, and if the frequency with which it is used were any sign of religion, ours might pass for the most devout people under heaven. We introduce it into every subject, and upon all occasions. A sentence is never complete without it. If we are earnest, it enlivens our discourse; if we are angry, it affords a vent to our passions; if we are merry, it quickens our enjoyments, and if we are sad, it relieves our misery. Like those particles in the Greek tongue, which to the philologist give a delicate turn to the meaning, but which to the common reader might be removed without being missed, the name of God is indispensable in the vulgar dialect of the people, but it takes a practised ear to detect the shade which it gives to the sentence. Many persons would be dumb if they were not allowed to be profane. The only words which, as nimble servitors, are ready to obey their bidding, are the names of God and the awful terms in which He announces the final doom of the guilty. These are their vocabulary. Judging from the discourse which he is likely to hear in the streets, a stranger might infer that the name was all that we had left of God; that we were a nation of atheists, who had at

last discovered that He was only a word, and, determined to make reprisals for the terrors with which superstition had clothed Him, we were degrading even the name by the lowest associations. That a puny mortal should thus trifle with the majesty of God, and make a jest of the Divine judgments, is a spectacle which may well astonish the angels, and ought to confound ourselves. Devils hate, but they dare not make light of God. It is only here upon earth, where the patience of God is as infinite as His being, that the name which fills heaven with reverence and hell with terror is an idle word. Profaneness naturally leads to licentiousness, by dissolving the sentiment of reverence.

Closely connected with levity in the use of the Divine name, is the profaneness which treats with contempt the positive institution of the Sabbath. Here the government is implicated in the sin. It encourages the desecration of the Lord's Day by the companies which carry its mails. The Sabbath, as an external institute, is absolutely essential to the maintenance and propagation of Christianity in the world, and until the Christian religion is disproved, and the supremacy of Christ set aside, no government on earth can annul it with impunity.

It is also characteristic of our people that they are self-sufficient and vainglorious, to a degree that makes them ridiculous. They love to boast, and they love to sacrifice to their own drag and to burn incense to their own net. They feel themselves competent for every enterprise. They can scale heaven, weigh the earth, and measure the sea. Their own arms and their own right hand will get them the victory in every undertaking. Even the style of their conversation is grandiloquent. The hyperbole is their favorite figure, and the superlative their favorite degree of comparison. To hear their self-laudations, you would never dream that they acknowledged a Providence, or depended on any superior power. All this is the grossest atheism. The consequence of this self-sufficiency

is a want of reverence for any thing. We honor neither God nor the king. We revile our rulers, and speak evil of dignities, with as little compunction as we profane the ordinances of religion. Nothing is great but ourselves. It is enough to indicate these types of sin, without dwelling upon them. The important thing is to feel that they are sins. They are so common that they cease to impress us, and in some of their aspects they are so grotesque, they provoke a smile more readily than a tear.

4. Having adverted to the sins which belong to us as members of the Confederacy, let us now turn to those which belong to us as a particular Commonwealth. I shall restrict myself to our dealings with the institution which has produced the present convulsions of the country, and brought us to the verge of ruin. That the relation betwixt the slave and his master is not inconsistent with the word of God, we have long since settled. Our consciences are not troubled, and have no reason to be troubled, on this score. We do not hold our slaves in bondage from remorseless considerations of interest. If I know the character of our people, I think I can safely say, that if they were persuaded of the essential immorality of slavery, they would not be backward in adopting measures for the ultimate abatement of the evil. We cherish the institution not from avarice, but from principle. We look upon it as an element of strength, and not of weakness, and confidently anticipate the time when the nations that now revile us would gladly change places with us. In its last analysis, slavery is nothing but an organization of labor, and an organization by virtue of which labor and capital are made to coincide. Under this scheme, labor can never be without employment, and the wealth of the country is pledged to feed and clothe it. Where labor is free, and the laborer not a part of the capital of the country, there are two causes constantly at work, which, in the excessive contrasts they produce, must end in agrarian revolutions and intolerable distress. The first is

the tendency of capital to accumulate. Where it does not include the laborer as a part, it will employ only that labor which will yield the largest returns. It looks to itself, and not to the interest of the laborer. The other is the tendency of population to outstrip the demands for employment. The multiplication of laborers not only reduces wages to the lowest point, but leaves multitudes wholly unemployed. While the capitalist is accumulating his hoards, rolling in affluence and splendor, thousands that would work if they had the opportunity are doomed to perish of hunger. The most astonishing contrasts of poverty and riches are constantly increasing. Society is divided between princes and beggars. If labor is left free, how is this condition of things to be obviated? The government must either make provision to support people in idleness, or it must arrest the law of population and keep them from being born, or it must organize labor. Human beings cannot be expected to starve. There is a point at which they will rise in desperation against a social order which dooms them to nakedness and famine, whilst their lordly neighbor is clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. They will scorn the logic which makes it their duty to perish in the midst of plenty. Bread they must have, and bread they will have, though all the distinctions of property have to be abolished to provide it. The government, therefore, must support them, or an agrarian revolution is inevitable. But shall it support them in idleness? Will the poor, who have to work for their living, consent to see others as stout and able as themselves clothed and fed like the lilies of the field, while they toil not, neither do they spin? Will not this be to give a premium to idleness? The government, then, must find them employment; but how shall this be done? On what principle shall labor be organized so as to make it certain that the laborer shall never be without employment, and employment adequate for his support? The only way in which it can be done, as

a permanent arrangement, is by converting the laborer into capital; that is, by giving the employer a right of property in the labor employed; in other words, by slavery. The master must always find work for his slave, as well as food and raiment. The capital of the country, under this system, must always feed and clothe the country. There can be no pauperism, and no temptations to agrarianism. That non-slaveholding States will eventually have to organize labor, and to introduce something so like to slavery that it will be impossible to discriminate between them, or to suffer from the most violent and disastrous insurrections against the system which creates and perpetuates their misery, seems to be as certain as the tendencies in the laws of capital and population to produce the extremes of poverty and wealth. We do not envy them their social condition. With sanctimonious complacency they may affect to despise us, and to shun our society as they would shun the infection of a plague. They may say to us, *Stand by—we are holier than thou;* but the day of reckoning must come. As long as the demand for labor transcends the supply, all is well: capital and labor are mutual friends, and the country grows in wealth with mushroom rapidity. But when it is no longer capital asking for labor, but labor asking for capital; when it is no longer work seeking men, but men seeking work—then the tables are turned, and unemployed labor and selfish capital stand face to face in deadly hostility. We desire to see no such state of things among ourselves, and we accept as a good and merciful constitution the organization of labor which Providence has given us in slavery. Like every human arrangement, it is liable to abuse; but in its idea, and in its ultimate influence upon the social system, it is wise and beneficent. We see in it a security for the rights of property and a safeguard against pauperism and idleness, which our traducers may yet live to wish had been engrafted upon their own institutions. The idle declamation about degrading men to the condition

of chattels, and treating them as cows, oxen, or swine; the idea that they are regarded as tools and instruments, and not as beings possessed of immortal souls, betray a gross ignorance of the real nature of the relation. Slavery gives one man the right of property in the labor of another. The property of man in man is only the property of man in human toil. The laborer becomes capital, not because he is a thing, but because he is the exponent of a presumed amount of labor. This is the radical notion of the system, and all legislation upon it should be regulated by this fundamental idea.

The question now arises, Have we, as a people and a State, discharged our duty to our slaves? Is there not reason to apprehend that in some cases we have given occasion to the calumnies of our adversaries, by putting the defence of slavery upon grounds which make the slave a different kind of being from his master? Depend upon it, it is no light matter to deny the common brotherhood of humanity. The consequences are much graver than flippant speculators about the diversity of races are aware of. If the African is not of the same blood with ourselves, he has no lot nor part in the Gospel. The redemption of Jesus Christ extends only to those who are partakers of the same flesh and blood with Himself. The ground of His right to redeem is the participation, not of a like, but of a common nature. Had the humanity of Jesus been miraculously created apart from connection with the human race, though it might in all respects have been precisely similar to ours, He could not, according to the Scriptures, have been our Redeemer. He must be able to call us brethren before He can impart to us His saving grace. No Christian man, therefore, can give any countenance to speculations which trace the negro to any other parent but Adam. If he is not descended from Adam, he has not the same flesh and blood with Jesus, and is therefore excluded from the possibility of salvation. Those who defend slavery upon the

plea that the African is not of the same stock with ourselves, are aiming a fatal blow at the institution, by bringing it into conflict with the dearest doctrines of the gospel. To arm the religious sentiment against it, is to destroy it. When the question at stake is, whether a large portion of mankind can be saved, we want some thing more than deductions from doubtful phenomena. Nothing but the Word of God can justify us in shutting the gates of mercy upon any portion of the race. The science, falsely so called, which proffers its aid upon such conditions, is such a friend to slavery as Joab to Amasa, who met him with the friendly greeting, *Art thou in health, my brother?* and stabbed him under the fifth rib. I am happy to say that such speculations have not sprung from slavery. They were not invented to justify it. They are the offspring of infidelity, a part of the process by which science has been endeavoring to convict Christianity of falsehood; and it is as idle to charge the responsibility of the doctrine about the diversity of species upon slaveholders, as to load them with the guilt of questioning the geological accuracy of Moses. Both are assaults of infidel science upon the records of our faith, and both have found their warmest advocates among the opponents of slavery. Our offence has been, that in some instances we have accepted and converted into a plea, the conclusions of this vain deceit. Let us see to it that we give our revilers no handle against us; above all, that we make not God our enemy. Let us not repudiate our kindred with the poor brethren whom He has scattered among us, and entrusted to our guardianship and care. Let us receive them as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Let us recognize them as having the same Father, the same Redeemer, and the same everlasting destiny.

Let us inquire, in the next place, whether we have rendered unto our servants that which is just and equal. Is our legislation in all respects in harmony with the idea of

slavery? Are our laws such that we can heartily approve them in the presence of God? Have we sufficiently protected the person of the slave? Are our provisions adequate for giving him a fair and impartial trial when prosecuted for offences? Do we guard as we should his family relations? And, above all, have we furnished him with proper means of religious instruction? These and such questions we should endeavor to answer with the utmost solemnity and truth. We have come before the Lord as penitents. The people whom we hold in bondage are the occasion of all our troubles. We have been provoked by bitter and furious assailants to deal harshly with them, and it becomes us this day to review our history, and the history of our legislation, in the light of God's truth, and to abandon, with ingenuous sincerity, whatever our consciences can not sanction. Let not the taunts of our revilers shake us from our propriety. Let it be our first care to commend ourselves to God, and, if He be for us, what does it signify who is against us? Our slaves are a solemn trust, and while we have a right to use and direct their labor, we are bound to feed, clothe and protect them, to give them the comforts of this life, and to introduce them to the hopes of a blessed immortality. They are moral beings, and it will be found that in the culture of their moral nature we reap the largest reward from their service. The relation itself is moral, and in the tender affections and endearing sympathies it evokes, it gives scope for the exercise of the most attractive graces of human character. Strange as it may sound to those who are not familiar with the system, slavery is a school of virtue, and no class of men have furnished sublimer instances of heroic devotion than slaves in their loyalty and love to their masters. We have seen them rejoice at the cradle of the infant, and weep at the bier of the dead; and there are few amongst us, perhaps, who have not drawn their nourishment from their generous breasts. Where the relations are so kindly, there is every motive of fidelity on

our part. Let us apply with unflinching candor the golden rule of our Saviour. Have we rendered to our slaves what, if we were in their circumstances, we should think it right and just in them to render to us. We are not bound to render unto them what they may in fact desire. Such a rule would transmute morality into arbitrary caprice. But we are bound to render unto them what they have a right to desire: that is, we are bound to render unto them that which is just and equal. The Saviour requires us to exchange places, in order that we may appreciate what is just and equal, free from the benumbing influences which are likely to pervert the judgment when there is no personal interest in the decision. I need not say that it is our duty as a Commonwealth to develope all the capabilities of good which the relation of slavery contains. They have never yet been fully unfolded. We have had to attend so much to the outer defences, that we have not been in a condition to give full play to the energies of the inward life. This is the problem to which Christian statesmen should hereafter direct their efforts.

II. This day is a day of *prayer*, as well as of humiliation and confession. There are blessings which in our present circumstances we urgently need, and we should make them the burden of importunate supplications. The first is the grace of magnanimity, that our moderation may be known unto all men. By moderation, I do not mean tameness and servility of spirit; and by magnanimity I do not mean what Aristotle seems to understand by it—a consciousness of worth which feels itself entitled to great rewards. The true notion of it is, a just sense of what is due to the dignity of the State, and an humble reliance upon God to make it equal to every occasion. The mind that feels the responsibility of its spiritual endowments, and aims at the perfection of its nature in the consummation of an end which satisfies the fullness of its being, while it arrogates nothing of merit to itself, but ascribes all its capacities to

the unmerited bounties of God; the mind that is conscious of what is due to mind, and intent upon fulfilling its own idea—is truly great; and the more thoroughly it is penetrated with this consciousness, the more deeply it is humbled under the conviction of its manifold shortcomings, and the more earnest in its cries for grace to enable it to win the prize. To know our true place in the universe, to feel that we are possessed of noble powers, and that we are bound to pursue an end that is worthy of them, is not pride, but sobriety of judgment. Pride emerges when we attribute to ourselves the excellence of our gifts; when we cherish a spirit of independence and self sufficiency, and rob God of the glory which is due to His bounty. Humility is not a confession that mind is intrinsically little: it is only the conviction of its absolute dependence upon God, and of its relative nothingness when compared with Him. A Commonwealth is magnanimous when it comprehends the vocation of a State, when it rises to the dignity of its high functions, and seeks to cherish a spirit in harmony with the great moral purposes it was ordained to execute. A magnanimous State can not be the victim of petty passions. It is superior to rashness, to revenge, to irritation, and caprice. It has an ideal which it aims to exemplify; cultivates a mind upon a level with its calling, and, turning neither to the right nor to the left, presses with undeviating step to the goal before it. It is calm, collected, self-possessed, resolved. It dares do all that may become a State. It will attempt nothing more; it will be content with nothing less. That we, as a Commonwealth, in the trying circumstances in which we are placed, may be able to exhibit this spectacle of magnanimity to the world; that we may command its admiration by the dignity and self-respect of our bearing, even though we should not secure its assent to the wisdom of our policy; that we may make all men see and feel that we are actuated by principle, and not by passion, should be a subject of our

fervent supplications this day. Wisdom and courage are the inspiration of God.

In the next place, we should look to Him to raise up for us, as guides and leaders in the present emergency, men of counsel and understanding. Statesmen in the State, as Apostles in the Church, are special ministers of God. They arise at His bidding, and execute His behests. Moses and Joshua, Solon and Lycurgus, the Prince of Orange and Washington, were anointed and commissioned of Heaven for the work they so happily performed. To construct a Government of any kind, is a work of no ordinary magnitude; but the Government of a free people, with its complicated checks and balances, it is given only to the loftiest minds to be able to conceive, much less to create. If ever there was a time, since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, when the whole country needed the counsel and guidance of patriotic statesmen, it is now, when, under the lead of demagogues, factions and politicians, we have corrupted every principle of our polity, and brought the Government to the brink of dissolution. No human arm is equal to the crisis. No human eye can penetrate the future. Our only help is in God; from Him alone cometh our salvation. The highest proof of patriotism in the present conjuncture, is in penitence and humility to seek His favor, and if it is His purpose to redeem and save us, in answer to our prayers, He will cause the men to stand forth, and the people to honor and accept them whom He has commissioned to conduct us through the wilderness. In the meantime, let us scrupulously resist every influence that is unfriendly to the influence of His Spirit. Let us mortify every thought, and subdue every passion, upon which we can not sincerely invoke His blessing. If we are to lay the foundations if a new empire, or to readjust the proportions of the old, the only pledge of permanent success is the Divine favor. Happy is that people, and that people alone, whose God is the Lord.

Finally, let us pray that our courage may be equal to every emergency. Even though our cause be just, and our course approved of Heaven, our path to victory may be through a baptism of blood. Liberty has its martyrs and confessors, as well as religion. The oak is rooted amid wintry storms. Great truths come to us at great cost, and the most impressive teachers of mankind are those who have sealed their lessons with their blood. Our State may suffer; she may suffer grieviously; she may suffer long: Be it so: we shall love her the more tenderly and the more intensely, the more bitterly she suffers. It does not follow, even if she should be destined to fall, that her course was wrong, or her sufferings in vain. Thermopylæ was lost, but the moral power of Thermopylæ will continue as long as valor and freedom have a friend, and reverence for law is one of the noblest sentiments of the human soul. Let it be our great concern to know God's will. Let *right* and *duty* be our watchword; liberty, regulated by law, our goal and, leaning upon the arm of everlasting strength, we shall achieve a name, whether we succeed or fail, that posterity will not willingly let die.

9
QC
C4
.A1

CALL NUMBER
975.7
Z99C

Vol.
4

Date (for periodical)
1960-79

Copy No.

975.7 Z99C 1860-79 v.4 nos.61-
336808 83

THIS VOLUME DOES NOT CIRCULATE
OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY BUILDING